

MEMO

TO: Community Economic and Human Development Committee (CEHD)

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SUBJECT: Regional Comprehensive Plan Update / General Plan Direction on Regional Issues

DATE: November 4, 2004

During the current fiscal year, staff, under the direction of the CEHD Committee, and the Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force, is preparing a new Regional Comprehensive Plan. This report serves as the first periodic progress update, as will be provided to the Committee throughout the year. Particularly of note in this report, the RCP Task Force discussed the consideration of regional issues and policies within the local General Plan (see #2 below). The Task Force, and staff, are forwarding this discussion to the CEHD, in response to the Committee's ongoing interest in this issue.

Current progress on the plan includes:

1. On October 7, 2004, the Regional Council (RC) unanimously approved program Concepts and Approaches for the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) at the recommendation of the CEHD Committee.
2. The RCP Task Force held its first meeting on October 20. The Task Force discussed General Plan direction given by the State to consider regional issues. The Task Force is forwarding a matrix and research notes (both attached) describing these General plan considerations. The Task Force also began a review of comprehensive listing of regional policies compiled by staff.
3. Staff presented an update to the Strategic Plan Task Force on October 14. The RCP effort was directed as part of the agency strategic plan adopted in 2002.
4. Staff is in the process of scheduling RCP introductory presentations to sub-regional boards. At the November 4 meeting, staff will inform the CEHD Committee of presentations scheduled.
5. Staff is proceeding on early drafts of chapters, including expanded chapter outlines that will identify issues for Task Force discussion.

General Plan Connection to Regional Planning MATRIX

General Plan Element	Circulation	Land Use	Air Quality (Optional Element)	Housing	Conservation	Open-Space	Noise	Safety
Link to Regional Planning	Consider. MPO/COG determines regional policies, allocates funding (RTP, RTP)	Consider	Consider	Required. COG determines shares of regional housing need	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified
Guidelines Direction	Cities/counties encouraged to consider setting, coordinate with regional plans Caltrans gives direction on following issues: State/regional coordination corridor preservation Efficient use of infrastructure	Cities/counties encouraged to consider setting, coordinate with regional plans	Policies to decrease VMT have positive effect on Air Quality Consider the following: urban design issues accessibility trip distance encouraging non-motorized	Must identify adequate sites to accommodate need	Special considerations on sustainability, regional setting apply	Special considerations on sustainability, regional setting apply		
Govt. Code Reference	\$65103(f) and \$65080			\$65584				
Comment		Direction on land use is to consider RTP, RTP to the extent that land use effects system performance Relationship with Housing Element, site identification		Consistency requirement ties back to Land Use element. Housing Element is short-range (5 year) plan				
Special Considerations	Environmental Justice/Sustainable Development Not required elements, but strongly suggested for consideration throughout GP.							
Link to Regional Planning	Livable Communities and Smart Growth encouraged							

Southern California Association of Governments

Research Notes: Local General Plan Considerations to Regional Plans

SCAG staff has researched the State of California General Plan Guidelines in order to clarify the relationship between the local General Plan and regional planning efforts. With the exception of the Housing Element, coordination or consultation by a local government with regional plans is not required. Nevertheless, the General Plan Guidelines, which are prepared periodically by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, in many instances strongly encourage coordination with and consideration of regional issues and plans.

Key areas of the guidelines are summarized below. The "Notes" section that follows contains excerpts from the "2003 State of California General Plan Guidelines."

1. Circulation Element – Cities and counties are encouraged to coordinate this element with applicable state and regional transportation plans and the policies within this element should be consistent with regional air quality and transportation plans.

2. Housing Element – The Council of Governments (e.g. SCAG) allocates shares of regional housing need to sub-regions and local governments. Local governments, in turn, are required to identify adequate sites to meet the identified housing need. Because of the consistency requirement in General Plan law, sites that are identified in the Housing Element cannot contradict the land use designations and permitted uses in the Land Use Element or elsewhere in the plan.

3. Special General Plan Considerations – The Guidelines include this section which notes the importance of consistency with regional transportation and air quality plans. While there is no formal requirement, local governments are urged to show consistency between their general plans and these regional efforts.

- **Regional Transportation Planning** – The Guidelines state that the policies and plan proposals contained in the land use and circulation elements should reflect the RTP and RTIP. "Although there is no explicit requirement that the RTP and RTIP be consistent with local general plans, good practice dictates that cities and counties should address these regional goals, policies, and programs to the extent they are relevant."
- **Air Quality** – The guidelines explain that policies that aim to reduce vehicle trips and VMT can have a positive effect on air quality.

4. Sustainable Development and Environmental Justice – The second chapter of the Guidelines stresses that, while not required in the general plan sustainable development and environmental justice policies, "there is a strong case for [their] inclusion." This chapter promotes the benefits of development policies that incorporate the "three E's" - environment, economy, and equity. The laundry list of policies related to sustainable development and transit oriented development (TOD) discussed are very consistent with SCAG's Compass Principles.

Additional Reference Details

The following pages offer more detail to the linkages summarized above by providing excerpts from the "2003 State of California General Plan Guidelines." The most relevant text is highlight in bold.

1. Circulation Element

No city or county can ignore its regional setting. The local planning agency should coordinate its circulation element provisions with applicable state and regional transportation plans (see §65103(f) and §65080, et seq.). Likewise, the state must coordinate its plans with those of local governments (§65080(a)). The federal government is under a similar obligation (Title 23 USC §134). Caltrans is particularly interested in the transportation planning roles of local general plans and suggests that the following areas be emphasized:

- Coordination of planning efforts between local agencies and Caltrans districts
- Preservation of transportation corridors for future system improvements
- Development of coordinated transportation system management plans that achieve the maximum use of present and proposed infrastructure

The circulation element should contain objectives, policies, principles, plan proposals, and/or standards for planning the infrastructure that supports the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage, and communications. **These development policies should be consistent with regional air quality and transportation plans.** With this and the above ideas for data and analysis in mind, cities and counties may wish to consider development policies for the following:

- The development and improvement of major thoroughfares, including future acquisitions and dedications, based on proposed land use patterns and projected demand. This may include a street and highway classification system. (L)
- The location and design of major thoroughfares in new developments. (N)
 - Consideration of street pattern (curvilinear, grid, modified grid, etc.).
- The design of local streets (including, but not limited to, width, block size, and accommodation of parking and bicycle and pedestrian traffic).
- Level-of-service standards for transportation routes, intersections, and transit.
 - Separate level-of-service standards for bicycle and pedestrian traffic or integrated level-of-service standards that consider multiple modes.
- Enhanced circulation between housing and workplaces. (L)
- The scheduling and financing of circulation system maintenance projects.
- The location and characteristics of transportation terminals. (L)
- The development, improvement, timing, and location of community sewer, water, and drainage lines and facilities. (L, CO)
- The current and future locations of:
 - Oil and natural gas pipelines.
 - Power plants.
 - Major electric transmission lines and corridors. (DIA) (L)
- The acquisition of necessary public utility rights-of-way. (L)
- Preferences for financing measures to expand and improve public utilities.
- Standards for transportation and utility-related exactions.
- Assistance to those who cannot afford public utility services.

- The mix of transportation modes proposed to meet community needs.
- The development and improvement of transit and paratransit services.
- Transit and paratransit assistance.
- The roles of railroads and private bus companies in the transportation system. (N)
- The development and improvement of rail and private bus facilities and services.
- The encouragement of railroad and private bus company services.
- Transit-oriented development strategies. (L)
 - Identify transportation nodes suitable for future transit-oriented development.
 - Adjust traffic level-of-service requirements (traffic congestion standards) around transit-oriented developments to promote transit ridership.
- The preservation of abandoned railroad rights of way for future transportation corridor use. (L)
- The development and improvement of bicycle routes and walkways.
- Proposed truck routes. (N)
- Policies supporting truck route regulations. (N)
- The safety of the traveling public, including pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The development and improvement of port, harbor, and waterway facilities. (L, CO)
- The development and improvement of aviation facilities. (L)
- The mitigation of aviation-related hazards (including hazards to aircraft and hazards posed by aircraft). (L, N)
- The consistency of the general plan with the provisions of any airport land use plan (§65302.3). (L, N)
- Strategies for the management of parking supply such as increased parking fees, graduated parking fees, metered on-street parking, and staggered work schedules.
- Strategies for the control of parking demand such as improved transit service, amenities for bicyclists, and subsidized rideshare vehicles.
- Transportation system management policies.
- The respective roles of the private sector and various public agencies in developing, improving and maintaining circulation infrastructure.
- The identification, development and maintenance of evacuation and emergency access routes. (S)
- **Measures that reduce motor vehicle air pollution, consistent with the regional air quality and transportation plan policies. (L, CO)**

2. Special General Plan Considerations (Chapter 10)

A number of state and federal statutes and regulatory programs can have a direct bearing on the general plan and need to be considered in any general plan process.

Regional Transportation Planning

These areas of emphasis are addressed through Caltrans' Intergovernmental Review (IGR), Regional Planning, and System Planning programs. One of the program's major purposes is to resolve transportation problems early enough in the local land use development process to avoid costly delays to development. Coordinating state and local transportation planning is a key to the success of a circulation element. For more information on coordination, contact your Caltrans District Office's IGR coordinator.

Relation to the General Plan

The policies and plan proposals contained in the land use and circulation elements should reflect the RTP and RTIP. Clearly, transit standards, congestion

management measures, proposed facilities, and transportation-related funding may directly affect land use patterns and capital improvements. Although there is no explicit requirement that the RTP and RTIP be consistent with local general plans, good practice dictates that cities and counties should address these regional goals, policies, and programs to the extent they are relevant. The city or county should consult with the RTPA and CMA when updating or adopting a circulation element or when considering changes to the land use element that would involve traffic or transportation issues.

Air Quality

In addition, COGs with transportation planning responsibilities must address air quality in order to ensure that regional transportation plans and programs conform to air quality plans.

Relation to the General Plan

Land use and air quality are linked by automobile use. Over the past 30 years, the total number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the state has increased at a much faster rate than population growth. Between 1970 and 1995, total annual VMT in California more than doubled, increasing from 103 billion miles to over 270 billion miles of travel per year. During the same time period, the state's population grew by about 60 percent, increasing from 20 to 32 million people. Relationships between land use patterns, traffic circulation, and accessibility can have an impact on the amount and type of travel, which in turn affects air quality. Urban design that reduces the need for vehicle trips or the distances people need to drive and that provides ready access to public transit, bike paths, and pedestrian facilities can have a positive impact on air quality.

4. Sustainable Development and Environmental Justice

While environmental justice is not a mandatory topic in the general plan, there is a strong case for its inclusion. Federal and state anti-discrimination statutes, which have a long history, apply to planning as they do to other policy areas. As discussed below, environmental justice issues are often related to failures in land use planning. **Planning policies that promote livable communities and smart growth can be tools for achieving environmental justice.** In keeping with that idea, this chapter begins with a discussion of sustainable development. Sustainable development provides a context for understanding how environmental justice fits into land use planning. This chapter concludes with a discussion of transit-oriented development, which has important implications for environmental justice and sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development encompasses established principles of good planning and advocates a proactive approach to future development. The basic concept of sustainability is meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development can be further defined as promoting the "three E's:" environment, economy, and equity. For example, a decision or action aimed at promoting economic development should not result in decreased environmental quality or social inequity. Ensuring that a given decision or action promotes all three E's is often referred to as the triple bottom line.

What does sustainable development look like on the ground? In a community that is developing sustainably, the neighborhood is the basic building block of urban design and

is characterized by walkability, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing. Walkability is a function of compactness and density. Attention to streetscape and public spaces is a key design element in creating desirable places to live. Such neighborhoods, also known as neo-traditional or new urbanist development, are more likely to support efficient transit systems. The character and function of each neighborhood is then placed properly within its regional setting. This approach to planning, from the neighborhood to the regional level, is often referred to as smart growth.

Sustainable development goals and policies include the following:

Decrease urban sprawl:

- Promote compact, walkable, mixed-use development.
- Promote infill development
- Restore urban and town centers
- Limit non-contiguous (leapfrog) development
- Promote transit-oriented development

Protect open space and working landscapes:

- Conserve prime agricultural lands
- Conserve lands of scenic and recreational value
- Use open space to define urban communities

Protect environmentally sensitive lands:

- Conserve natural habitat lands
- Preserve habitat connectivity
- Minimize impact to watershed functions, including water quality and natural floodways
- Avoid natural hazards

Create strong local and regional economies:

- Encourage jobs/housing balance
- Provide adequate housing for all income levels
- Encourage the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure
- Provide a fair and predictable land use planning process

Promote energy and resource efficiency:

- Support energy- and resource-efficient industries
- Promote waste reduction programs, such as recycling
- Promote alternative forms of transportation
- Promote energy- and resource-efficient buildings

Promote equitable development:

- Require fair treatment in the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies
- Promote mixed-income housing development
- Promote alternative transportation options to increase access
- Promote economic opportunity for all segments of the community
- Protect culturally significant sites

Transit Oriented Development

Cities and counties should promote more livable communities by expanding opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD) so that residents minimize traffic and pollution impacts from traveling for purposes of work, shopping, school, and recreation.

TOD is defined as moderate- to high-density development located within an easy walk of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment, and shopping opportunities. TOD encourages walking and transit use without excluding the automobile. TOD can be new construction or redevelopment of one or more buildings whose design and orientation facilitate transit use (*Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California*, California Department of Transportation, 2002).

A well-designed, vibrant TOD community can provide many benefits for local residents and businesses, as well as for the surrounding region. Compact development near transit stops can increase transit ridership and decrease rates of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), thereby yielding a good return on transit system investments. TOD can also provide mobility choices, increase public safety, increase disposable household income by reducing transportation costs, reduce air pollution and energy consumption rates, help conserve resources and open space, assist in economic development, and contribute to the housing supply.

TOD is a strategy that may help a community achieve its general plan goals related to circulation, housing, environmental quality, and economic development. Additionally, by improving access to jobs and housing and revitalizing existing neighborhoods, TOD can be a tool for promoting environmental justice.

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